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FM AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9021
INFO RUEHZA/WHA CENTRAL AMERICAN COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 0139
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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

DEPT FOR WHA/CEN, EAP/CM AND CA

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: CS CVIS PGOV PINR PREL
SUBJECT: COSTA RICA TIGHTENS PREVIOUSLY-LOOSENED VISA
REQUIREMENT FOR CHINESE BUSINESSMEN

REF: SAN JOSE 1783 AND PREVIOUS
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¶1. (SBU) On October 4, GOCR Immigration Director Mario Zamora told us that the previously-eased visa requirements for Chinese businessmen seeking to travel to Costa Rica had been discontinued. Zamora explained that due to GOCR concern that proving "businessman" status would be a relatively easy task that would invite fraud, the Immigration Department decided to eliminate the "businessman" privilege.

¶2. (SBU) This places most Chinese visa applicants back in category 4, the toughest Costa Rican visa category, which requires permission from Immigration to issue a visa. Chinese travelers with valid US or EU visas, would continue to be admitted under the lighter category 2 requirements, which permit entry into Costa Rica, visa-free, for up to 30 days. Zamora said the GOCR remains concerned that illegal travelers may obtain fraudulent US or EU visas to enter Costa Rica and then continue their trek to the US from here.

¶3. (SBU) COMMENT: This is a step in the right direction. The "businessman" clause allowed for easy forgery of documentary evidence and placed the GOCR at a disadvantage. In fact, our Consular Section already received one patently fraudulent letter from an alleged Chinese labor syndicate inviting Costa Ricans to visit China via the US. Had the businessman rule not been reversed, we might have seen many more such attempts. Despite the warmth surrounding the establishment of Costa Rican-Chinese relations, Zamora, who remains a staunch and honest advocate of proper immigration protection, was able to push back to address this concern.
BRENNAN